

VINE WEEVIL

What is Vine Weevil? Vine Weevil is an insect that is rarely seen, but the way it affects plants can be devastating.

There are two main forms that you may find the vine weevil - the adult and the larvae or grub stage.

The adult form causes fairly limited damage to the plant and this can be seen by characteristic notches eaten from the outer edges of the leaves. It is difficult to catch them 'red handed' as this occurs at night, you may find them during the day in cracks in walls, amongst leaf litter and even in the house.

The adults then lay their eggs in the soil/compost at the base of the plant.

The grubs that hatch from the eggs cause the main problems by eating their way through the entire root system.

These grubs are unmistakable and all have a characteristic 'C' shape with a brown head, the body is up to 10mm in length.

Symptoms

The first sign that there may be a presence of vine weevil are the notches eaten from the leaves, indicating adults about. The second symptom appears when the grub has gone to into action and eaten the roots. As a consequence of this action the plants appear to wilt, first by yellowing of the leaves followed by total collapse. No amount of watering can remedy this.

Control

To control this pest there are several options available in the form of insecticides, physical removal and biological control.

Insecticides

Recently launched is a new compost that will protect against the grub. Levingtons Plant Protection Compost is a unique compost range that contains an insecticide called Intercept. Intercept will give effective control for up to one year. When re-potting infested plants remove and wash all compost from the roots as Intercept will not 'flow' from treated to untreated compost. The result would be existing grubs continuing to live in the old compost around the rootball. Re-pot using the Plant protection compost. A recent introduction, available now is an insecticide drench that works systemically for up to six months. The drench is best applied from spring time when the plants are actively growing. It is made by Bio and called Provado. The drench also controls greenfly, whitefly, blackfly and sciarid fly.

Physical Control

Physical removal sounds easier than it is. To catch the adults you require a torch and a good set of eyes. At night-time the adults come out to feed and will climb the plants to their feeding places. They cannot fly so if you see one they are easy to catch, simply place on the floor and squash. Another method of catching the adults is to use barrier glue that can be applied to the rim of a pot. As the adult tries to cross it, it becomes 'glued' to the spot ready for squashing. Use soil based compost used in containers will deter the weevil, as they prefer light peaty composts to lay their eggs in.



Biological Control

Biological Control is very effective against the grubs. This method uses the natural predator of the grub, a nematode (microscopic worm). At our centres we have order this biological control method for you, which will be sent to you through the post. To apply it simply follow the instructions, add water to create a solution. With the solution mixed, (don't worry the nematodes are too small to see) you can water your pots and containers and border plants safe in the knowledge that any grubs will be found by the nematodes and killed. One treatment will last for approximately six weeks providing the temperature is high enough. For this to be effective the average temperature needs to be above 10°C, so roughly from May until September.